

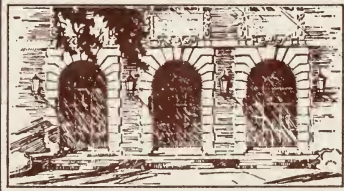
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Monaghan, Jay
A BRIEF HISTORY OF A
GREAT STATE

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF A GREAT STATE

By JAY MONAGHAN
State Historian





A part of Chicago that was devastated by the fire of 1871. The building in the left background is the Court House

A Brief History of a Great State

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PÈRE JACQUES MARQUETTE and Louis Jolliet, accompanied by five companions, all Frenchmen, were the first Europeans to see the Illinois country and write about it. Other illiterate Frenchmen or half-breeds, wild fellows known as *coureurs de bois*, may have visited the country ahead of them but the first expedition of record was made in 1673 by Marquette and Jolliet. They floated down the Mississippi along the future state's western boundary, and went on to the Arkansas. On their return trip the explorers entered the mouth of the Illinois River, paddled north and east up the Des Plaines River, crossed to the Chicago and thence down to Lake Michigan. The travelers met many Indians who lived by hunting, fishing, and the cultivation of a few meagre crops. An earlier mound-builder civilization had already disappeared. The remnants of their pyramids, larger than any preserved in Egypt, were mute reminders of a past civilization that may have lasted until the time of Columbus' discovery of America but which had completely vanished during the hundred and eighty-one years which elapsed before Marquette and Jolliet came to Illinois. The Indians whom they saw were undoubtedly descendants of the mound builders but the ancient civilization was gone.

Six years after Marquette and Jolliet's trip, La Salle and his lieutenant, Henri de Tonti, with another party of Frenchmen, set out for the prairies to found a colony and prevent English settlers from spreading into the West. In



House raising in pioneer days. The diorama is displayed in the Museum at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

1680 they built Fort Crèvecoeur on the left bank of the Illinois River below where Peoria would one day stand. The fort was abandoned before spring and in 1682 La Salle and Tonti built another at Starved Rock.

The first permanent French settlers came to the Illinois country during the next generation, and the early 1700's found many small villages along the Mis-

issippi—towns called Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher, and Cahokia. Near the latter place, in 1720, Louis XIV built Fort Chartres to protect his subjects from the British. He rebuilt it twice during the troublous times when rivalry between England and France for dominion over North America yearly grew more intense and finally flamed into the French and Indian War in 1754.



General George Rogers Clark from a portrait by Otto Stark

Treaty of 1763

The treaty of 1763 allotted all of Canada and the disputed western country to Great Britain. A few soldiers came to Illinois to garrison the French towns. Thirteen years later the English colonists east of the Alleghenies revolted against their mother country. During the Revolution—in 1778—young George Rogers Clark surprised the French villages in Illinois and annexed them for his state, Virginia. The French inhabitants had little sympathy for the British, and the small garrisons surrendered quickly. At this time Patrick Henry was governor of Virginia (1776-79) and he may thus be considered the first governor of the land which later became the state of Illinois.

Several of the newly independent states, besides Virginia, claimed lands in the West. With much bickering and mutual suspicion, they all ceded their claims to the central government. In 1787 an organic act, the Northwest Ordinance, provided that the territory should eventually be divided into states and admitted into the Union. In 1790 the first governor of the Northwest Territory, Arthur St. Clair, came to Kaskaskia to inspect his new domain. He found the French villagers living peacefully by their own laws. Many of the more wealthy had moved across the Mississippi into Spanish territory because they had heard—truly enough—that the Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery.

Not Opposed to Slavery

Governor St. Clair was not opposed to slavery. He reassured the French that their property in men would not be destroyed. The Ordinance, he said, did not apply to slaves already in the area. In 1800 the western part of the Northwest Territory was set apart as Indiana Territory and a new governor, General William Henry Harrison, came in January 1801 to administer it from a new capital in Vincennes. Harrison was also in favor of slavery. He knew that many of the pioneers would come from the South and bring their slaves with them. He helped prepare an act for holding slaves in the territory as bond

servants. In 1809 Illinois was separated from Indiana and set up as a new territory with a capital at Kaskaskia. Ninian Edwards, a prominent politician from slaveholding Kentucky, was appointed first territorial governor. It seemed probable that Illinois, when it became a state, would favor slavery.

Three years after Illinois Territory was created, the frontier was upset by the War of 1812. On Lake Michigan the Fort Dearborn massacre occurred. Far off in southern Illinois the settlers organized themselves into companies of rangers, constructed blockhouses, and saved themselves from the Indians who were in league with the British.

After the war, new settlers came to Illinois in great numbers. Shawneetown on the Ohio became a main point of entry for flatboat loads of homeseekers. To hasten the organization of the territory into a state, Nathaniel Pope, the territorial delegate in Washington, prepared an enabling act, which extended the upper boundary of the territory from the southern tip of Lake Michigan some sixty miles north, thus including the area of the Galena lead mines and the cabins along the Chicago River.

Constitution of 1818 Completed August 26

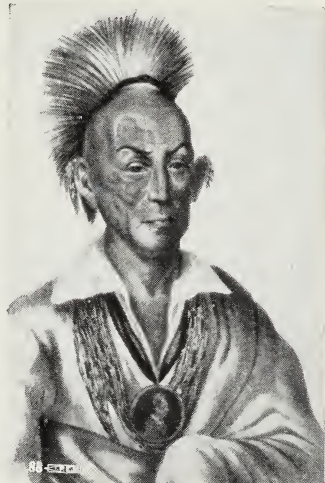
As Pope worked in Washington, a convention assembled in Illinois to write a constitution which was completed on August 26, 1818. Both houses of Congress passed resolutions favoring the admission of Illinois under this constitution and President Monroe approved it on December 3—celebrated now as Illinois Day. The first governor and lieutenant governor were Shadrach Bond and Pierre Menard, respectively. The former was a southerner and the latter a Frenchman from the group of early settlers, a slaveholder who had great influence with the Indians as well as his own people.

One of the first acts of the Illinois legislature was to move the new capital to Vandalia. In 1837 the capital was moved again, this time to Springfield. The increase in the state's population during these years was amazing. In 1800 it had totaled approximately 2,500 people. At the time of admission to the Union there were probably some 35,000. In 1820 the census showed 55,000 and by 1830 this number was trebled. In 1840 the population had increased to 476,000. The early slaveholding settlers from the South were soon outnumbered and an effort to frame a new state constitution, permitting slavery, was defeated in 1824. The same year marked the beginning of a new element in the state's political life, the rise of Jacksonian democracy. Edward Coles (1822-26) and Ninian Edwards (1826-30), the second and third state governors, were both members of the old order of rural aristocracy but their elections showed declining popularity for their class. With the governorship of John Reynolds (1830-34), the common man, typified in the Jacksonian era, had come to power.

Indians Make Their Last Stand

The Indians made their last stand in Illinois before this increasing population in 1832. Black Hawk was an old man, a friend of the British and a veteran of the War of 1812. With his warriors he defeated the white militia at Stillman's Run but retreated at once into Wisconsin where his band was practically annihilated. All tribal land titles were extinguished after his defeat. One Indian, Shabbona, has been revered in Illinois for warning pioneers about the approach of a war party from Black Hawk's band.

Settlers moved quickly into the Indian lands during the 1830's and a vast program of internal improvements commenced. Projects for railroads, turnpikes, canals, and river transportation were planned, all at state expense. Illinois' first railroad, the Northern Cross, extending from the steamboat docks at Meredosia to Jacksonville, was built and a canal



Chief Black Hawk



The Mormon temple in Nauvoo, considered in its time one of the architectural wonders of the West—from an old lithograph

Galena, home of Ulysses Grant in early '50s. The spirals of smoke emanate from lead mines—from *Das Illustrierte Mississippthal*



connecting Lake Michigan with the Mississippi via the Illinois was commenced. Then came the Panic of 1837, and for a few years the state was faced with probable bankruptcy. Governor Thomas Ford (1842-46) put the state on a firm financial footing by inducing the state's creditors to advance more money to complete the canal. He taxed the people heavily to pay interest but in 1848 boats began to pass through the locks and tolls soon paid off the obligations. Moreover, the state's population had reached 850,000 and the tax burden decreased accordingly.

During the dark decade in which the state struggled with finances, other noteworthy incidents occurred. The first Swedish settlers moved into the northern part of the state. A socialistic colony was founded at Bishop Hill. The religious sect known as Mormons settled at Nauvoo. The decade was also marked by a cholera plague, the Mexican War, and great migrations from Illinois to Oregon and California. The ill-fated Donner Party, most famous of all overland tragedies, left Springfield, Illinois, in 1846.

Mormons Originated in Western New York

The Mormons had originated in western New York. After establishing a church at Kirtland, Ohio, their seer and prophet, Joseph Smith, organized other communities in Missouri. The Latter Day Saints, as they called themselves, had trouble with neighbors who did not agree with their religious beliefs. Hoping to find a place of asylum, the church elders purchased a village on the Mississippi River in Hancock County, Illinois, in 1839 and named it Nauvoo. To protect themselves from gentiles, or nonmembers, the Mormons got a charter from the state which made them practically independent of the civil authorities. But instead of bringing peace, this charter was the Mormons' undoing. Nauvoo grew rapidly, soon becoming the largest city in Illinois with a population estimated at from 12,000 to 15,000. Great numbers of the newcomers were European converts. Gentiles claimed that Nauvoo had become the resort of counterfeitters and horse thieves who hid there to evade the sheriff. Before long all Mormons



THE NATIONAL GAME. THREE "OUTS" AND ONE "RUN".
ABRAHAM WINNING THE BALL.

A political cartoon of 1860 by Currier & Ives

were considered miscreants. Then Prophet Joseph Smith destroyed a newspaper, *The Nauvoo Expositor*, belonging to an unruly member of the church. This unconstitutional suppression of the press gave the gentile farmers of Hancock County a good excuse for threatening to sack the city. The church leaders were arrested and taken to the county seat at Carthage. The governor assured them protection in the jail but the mob overpowered the authorities and Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were lynched. Two more years of violence followed before the Mormons agreed to leave the state, part of them going to Great Salt Lake with Brigham Young and others to a new holy city in Missouri. During their Illinois residence from 1839 to 1846, they had constructed a temple which was considered one of the architectural wonders of the West, and Joseph Smith had been proposed as a candidate for President of the United States.

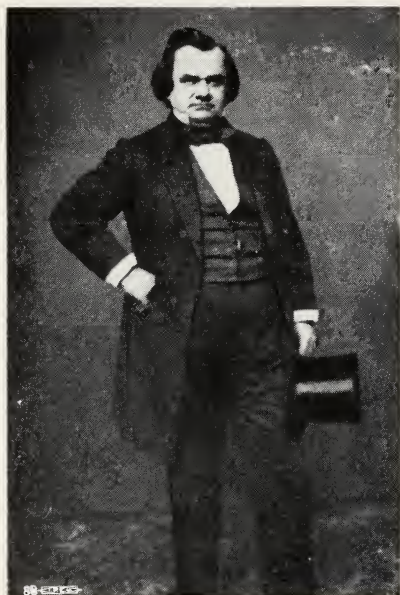
The Mexican War was popular in Illinois, with patriots flocking to enlist. Six regiments were raised in the state. Commanders used their military records in later political campaigns though Abraham Lincoln, a young congressman in Washington, won temporary political obscurity for himself by opposing the war. Colonel John J. Hardin, a rival of Lincoln's for Whig leadership in the state, was killed at Buena Vista and received a hero's burial at his Jacksonville home. Soldiers in Company G of the Fourth Regiment came back with a wooden leg which they claimed to have taken from Santa Anna's carriage at Cerro Gordo.

Mexican War Extends U. S. Territory

The treaty of peace extended United States territory mightily and northern abolitionists insisted that slavery must not be introduced in these new lands. The institution had been prohibited there by Mexico and to permit its introduction there after the war seemed contrary to progress and enlightenment. Sentiment against slavery had been gaining steadily since the days when Illinois had declared definitely against it in 1824, but many proslavery people still lived in the state. Moreover, some bond servants were held in Illinois, and planters shipped slaves in to harvest crops and then out again before they established their freedom. Slaves were legal property on two sides of Illinois, in Missouri

and Kentucky. Runaways found the state the shortest way to freedom in Canada. In 1837 Elijah Lovejoy was killed at Alton for insisting on his right to print an abolition newspaper. His brother Owen swore to devote the remainder of his own life to an antislavery crusade. His house became a stopping place for runaways. Other abolitionists joined in a concerted effort to help all slaves who wanted to go to Canada by what they called their Underground Railroad. In Chicago, Allan Pinkerton, who later founded a detective agency, smuggled the fugitives onto boats bound for freedom.

In 1850 the national slavery problem was solved temporarily by a compromise which among other things provided for the return of fugitives slaves. Some people hoped that the vexing dilemma was settled at last but Senator Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, introduced a bill in Congress to permit Kansas to enter the Union as a slave state if its residents so wished. To many this seemed like a step back toward the extension of the slave system. Amid great excitement a new party called Republican was formed and with it Abraham Lincoln cast his lot. In 1858 he challenged the well-known Stephen A.



Senator Stephen A. Douglas—the
"Little Giant"



Portrait of the Lincoln family by Francis Carpenter. Left to right; Mrs. Lincoln, Willie, Robert, Tad and Mr. Lincoln

Douglas to a series of joint debates in the seven congressional districts of Illinois. Lincoln and Douglas were both candidates for the Senate. Douglas won but Lincoln had become nationally famous. Two years later he was elected President and the Civil War commenced.

Southern Illinois was Democratic and proslavery. The fact that Illinois stayed with the Union during the war was due to the character and sincere efforts of Stephen A. Douglas, and other leading Democrats like John A. Logan and John A. McClernand. The war governor, Richard Yates, was confronted with bitter opponents in the legislature and once prevented them from blocking the war effort by proroguing the entire body. Logan and McClernand both became major generals in the Northern army and their commander, Ulysses S. Grant, was another Illinoisan.

Illinois Begins Prodigious Expansion

During the war Illinois prospered, and after peace came, it began a prodigious industrial expansion. In 1857 the Rock Island Bridge case, with Lincoln as attorney, marked the rising ascendancy of railroads over steamboats, and Chicago, the railroad center, soon outstripped the ancient steamboat metropolis of St. Louis as the greatest city in the West. To aid railroad construction, the government made a land grant to the Illinois Central in 1850. By that time the Galena and Chicago Union (later the Chicago and North Western) was running trains as far as Elgin. In 1854 the Alton and Rock Island railroads were both in operation. By 1856 thirteen railroads were connected with Chicago and most of the great modern lines in Illinois had been commenced. Immediately after the Civil War, the old iron rails were replaced by steel, with the Chicago Rolling Mills turning out the first in the United States. The new steel industry stimulated the production of coal. A geological survey in 1860 had disclosed that beds of coal underlay much of the prairie state. In ten years the number of mines increased from 73 to 322. Before long, Illinois ranked third among all the states in the production of bituminous coal. General manufacturing such as furniture, hosiery, and especially farm machinery flourished in Chicago, Rockford, Moline, and other cities. Barbed wire fences from DeKalb began to replace Osage orange hedges on the farms.



Illinois' present capitol while under construction. This unusual picture was made about 1871. The building was occupied in 1876.

Chicago Fire Destroys \$200,000,000 in Property

In 1871 the Chicago fire destroyed \$200,000,000 worth of property in a little over twenty-four hours. The city grew again as if by magic. Twice as much livestock came to the famous stockyards in 1872 as had come in 1870. In no time the rebuilt metropolis boomed with prosperity and was checked only slightly by the Panic of 1873. By the mid-eighties Potter Palmer could build a million-dollar residence in the city. At the same time (1886), the Haymarket Riot shocked the United States. Early in the 1890's Chicagoans began a campaign for a World's Fair—the Columbian Exposition—on the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. The great exhibition opened in 1893, drawing the eyes of the nation to Illinois and marking the state's maturity.

The great Panic of 1893 occurred during the Exposition and a year later the Pullman strike made labor history, beginning "government by injunction." Illinois was changing from an agricultural to an industrial state. Bigger and better crops were being raised but fewer people were required for farming and this trend continued. In 1870 the federal census enumerated 376,441 agriculturalists; in 1940 their number had declined to 352,524 while the population had increased from 2,540,000 to 7,630,000. During the same period the number of mechanical and mining workers increased from 133,221 to 908,657. The rapid increase in population had been due largely to immigration. At the outbreak of World War I, twenty per cent of the state's residents were of foreign birth. Germans, Swedes, and Irish came first in largest number, then came Italians, Greeks, and Russians. Chicago soon became one of the great Polish cities of the world.

Illinois Has Had Three Constitutions

Illinois has had three constitutions. The original organic act of 1818 was replaced by a more democratic document in 1848. A third constitution was framed in 1862 but the voters rejected it. In 1870 a constitution designed for the industrialized state was adopted. In 1920 another constitutional convention met, debated for three years and drew up a new organic act which was voted down by the people.



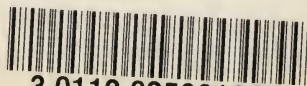


Historic Starved Rock—annually visited by more than a million vacationers



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